



COMING TOGETHER TO ADVOCATE FOR OLDER ADULTS

**NC Coalition on Aging
May Update – May 17, 2018**

ACTION NEEDED! Farm Bill with SNAP Work Requirements Up for Vote

on Friday: House Republicans are scheduled to vote on the 2018 Farm Bill, on Friday. Read more about this [here](#). Provisions of the Bill would dramatically expand mandatory state workfare programs in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), better known as food stamps, and require that most adults between 18 and 59 enroll or work at least part time to receive benefits. The National Council on Aging (NCOA) has established a site which has recommended talking points and provides access to your Representative's phone number. Click [here](#) to be connected to the NCOA site.

Legislature Reconvenes: The start of the short legislative session on Wednesday was anything but routine as approximately 20,000 North Carolina teachers and their supporters gathered in Raleigh for the "March for Students and Rally for Respect" and to take their message to legislators for increasing teacher pay and education spending. As the session gets underway, there is speculation that this session will truly be short in duration. House and Senate Republican budget leaders have been meeting behind closed doors for several weeks in hopes of developing a spending deal quickly. Adjusting the second year of the budget is the primary job of legislators during the short session. House Speaker Tim Moore and Senate leader Phil Berger have already announced that the two chambers have agreed on a spending target of \$23.9 billion. That is about \$270 million above what legislators approved for next year in last year's budget bill. Senate leader Burger has said that the Senate, which takes the lead on budget development this session, should have something to start voting on in early June.

In making budget decisions, legislators will have more money to work with this session. The state expects to collect \$357 million more than anticipated this current year, according to state economists. This makes the fourth consecutive year in which the state will record a surplus. These extra collections also led state economists to predict there will be an additional \$277 million at the state's disposal for the next fiscal year starting July 1.

In addition to budget deliberations, priority issues that the legislature is expected to take up include prison security, school safety, and water contamination. House Republicans are also studying several amendments to the constitution and will announce soon which ones will get a vote. Options being considered include amendments requiring a photo ID to vote, protecting crime victim's rights, protecting the right to hunt and fish, and banning lawmakers from raising the income tax rate higher than 5.5%. Action is also expected from legislators on proposals

from state agencies and legislative study committees that met during the interim, most of which aren't controversial. One thing that may not be on the agenda for the short session, however, is a controversial plan to redraw judicial districts. Legislative leaders say there is still not consensus on this matter.

Listed below is the calendar for both the House and Senate for when proposed bills have to be to bill drafting and have to be filed.

Calendar for 2018 House and Senate Bill Request/Filing Deadlines

Drafts	To Bill Drafting By 4:00 PM	Filed By 4:00 PM
Bills recommended by Study commissions	Thursday, May 17	Wednesday, May 30
Bills directly and primarily affecting 2018-2019 Budget	Friday, May 18	Thursday, May 31
Local Bills	Thursday, May 24	Thursday, June 7
Bills primarily affecting State or local retirement systems	Tuesday, May 22	Tuesday, June 5

Eligible to file in 2018 Short Session but no deadlines:

- (1) Bills amending the North Carolina Constitution.
- (2) Appointments to/confirmation of members of State Boards/commissions.
- (3) Resolutions not prohibited by House or Senate Rules.
- (4) Joint resolutions authorizing other bills and those bills if resolution passes by two-thirds vote in each chamber.
- (5) Election law bills.
- (6) Redistricting bills for House, Senate, Congress, judicial and prosecutorial, municipal, and other political subdivisions.
- (7) Bills responding to litigation related to the legality of legislative enactments.
- (8) Bills providing for impeachment of State officers.
- (9) Bills to disapprove Administrative Rules.
- (10) Adjournment resolution sine die.

Otherwise eligible for consideration

- (1) Bills that made cross-over.
- (2) Veto overrides.

Coalition Advocacy in Short Legislative Session: As announced previously, the Coalition on Aging will have a Virtual Advocacy Day on May 22. Members are encouraged to make calls and send e-mails to their Senate and House members as well as Health and Human Service Committee leadership regarding our priority issues. Contact information for members of the Senate can be found [here](#) and for the House [here](#). On June 6, Coalition members who are

available, are also invited to meet at the Legislative Building to make in-person visits with legislators about our priorities. More details about the May 22 Virtual Advocacy Day and the June 22 visits will be shared at the May 18 Coalition on Aging meeting.

Governor's Budget: Gov. Roy Cooper unveiled his [budget proposal](#) on May 10. His plan calls for more state spending than the spending target announced by Republican legislative leaders - \$24.5 billion compared to the \$23.9 billion announced by Senate leader Phil Berger and House Speaker Tim Moore. In releasing his budget plan, Cooper noted that he believes it's more important to spend money on education, health care and workforce training programs, rather than on "massive income tax breaks for corporations and wealthy people" and that he plans to pay for a portion of his budget proposals by canceling income tax cuts for businesses and the wealthiest North Carolinians. The legislature cut the state's income tax rate to 5.499% in 2013, and that rate is scheduled to drop again next year to 5.25%. Cooper says he wants to keep next year's tax cut in place for almost everyone, but he would keep taxing income above \$200,000 at the current 5.499%. He would also freeze the corporate income tax rate that is due to drop, saying that since Congress passed a major corporate income tax cut earlier this year, North Carolina doesn't need to add to that. He said those changes would bring in more than \$110 million in revenue for the state, which he would use to boost teacher pay by 8%. His plan would also give every other state employee a raise of either \$1,250 or 2%, whichever is large, and state law enforcement officers, like those in the Highway Patrol, would get another \$1,000 on top of that as would people who work in prisons and state psychiatric hospitals. His budget also includes a 1% cost-of-living increase for state retiree benefits. (From The Associated Press, 5/10/18)

There are several items in the Governor's budget of special interest to aging advocates.

There is recurring funding for a new position in the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services who will support expanded Adult Protective Services (APS) and Guardianship staff in county Departments of Social Services. The position will provide training, technical assistance, and program oversight to agencies hiring new staff to meet the increased need in both programs. This recommendation is supported by Social Services Block Grant funds of \$1 million. Increasing support for (APS) and guardianship is a priority of the Coalition on Aging. Other items in the budget that relate to aging directly or indirectly include the following:

- Appropriates an additional \$2.8 million in dedicated Deed Stamp tax revenue from real estate transactions through the end of the biennium to increase the supply of affordable housing through the Housing Trust Fund and appropriates \$3.9 million to increase access to permanent, community-based, integrated housing for individuals with disabilities (supports Olmstead decision).
- Increases funding for the rural health physician loan repayment program.
- Closes the Medicaid coverage gap.
- Supports transforming Medicaid.
- Strengthens mental health and substance use services including addressing the opioid and heroin epidemic, suicide prevention hotline, and mental health service gaps.
- Increases the complaint intake staff for the NC Division of Health Services Regulation.
- Provides operating cost and positions for the first phase of a long-term care facility for Central Prison.

- Provides funding for a new State Veterans Home in the Triangle and a new State Veterans Home in the Piedmont Triad region, for the routine repair and renovation of the four existing State Veterans Homes, and for expansion of two State Veterans Cemeteries in Black Mountain and Spring Lake.

Also of interest, the budget provides state match for the first year for a \$10 million US Elections Assistance grant (Help America Vote ACT - HAVA - grant). The grant is to be used to enhance technology and make election security enhancements.

Closing the Medicaid Coverage Gap: As noted above, Gov. Cooper’s budget proposal calls for closing the health care coverage gap by expanding Medicaid to cover many of the working poor, something that became an option under the Affordable Care Act (also known as Obamacare). Despite Congress' attempts to undermine the law, the expansion remains an option.

About \$1.4 billion in anticipated cost for the expansion would be revenue-neutral to the state, because hospitals and healthcare systems would foot the bill, according to state budget director Charles Perusse. When asked if the Governor would support the Carolina Cares bill, proposed last year by Republican members of the House of Representatives, Perusse said Cooper "would be open to any discussion to expanding health care and infusing the state with \$4 billion of federal money."

The Carolina Cares proposal includes a requirement that recipients who earn below 133% of the federal poverty level (\$16,146 for an individual, \$33,383 for a family of four) would need to be employed or performing volunteer work in order to qualify for assistance. People who are disabled, in school, performing caregiving duties or who are in substance abuse treatment would be exempted from the work requirement. An issue brief published last year by the North Carolina Institute of Medicine noted about 60% of households that are uninsured and eligible for Medicaid under this expansion are already engaged in part- or full-time work.

"Some state House Republicans support increased access to Medicaid with a work requirement and although the Governor has serious concerns about that he's pleased that there is some movement on this," emailed Sadie Weiner, an aide to Cooper, when asked for clarification of the Governor's position. But throughout the legislative interim, members of the state Senate have expressed their ongoing opposition to any attempts at expansion. (From Rose Hoban, NC Health News, 5/11/18)

General Assembly Website Revamped: The N.C. General Assembly has unveiled a new look for its website, ncleg.net. The new site makes it easier to access audio streams for sessions and meetings, and it includes a redesigned search function to find bills and individual legislators' pages. There is also a new dashboard feature to follow House and Senate sessions (a glitch blocking access to the dashboard from the guest wireless network has been fixed).

“My Carolina Promise” Agenda Announced: House and Senate Democrats on May 14 released their agenda for the 2019 session and beyond, should voters decide to hand Democrats the majority in the General Assembly in November. Such a sweeping turnover would be unprecedented. Republicans hold super-majorities in both the House and the Senate. Democrats would need to retain all of their current seats -- 45 in the House and 15 in the Senate -- while

flipping an additional 16 seats in the House and 11 in the Senate. Their agenda, labeled "My Carolina Promise," includes many proposals the party's been pushing for years, from increasing school spending and expanding Medicaid to protecting voter rights and resurrecting the state Earned Income Tax Credit. It also includes a few less partisan proposals, such as infrastructure spending and broadband expansion. One item could have come straight from the U.S. Supreme Court's docket: A proposal to enact independent redistricting reform. (From (Laura Leslie, WRAL NEWS, 5/14/18)

Looking Back on the Primary Elections: There were no statewide races in the primary elections earlier this month and only 14% of voters actually voted, but the 75 legislative primary elections and 18 Congressional primaries produced some interesting results. The surprise upset of 9th District Congressman Robert Pittenger by Republican Mark Harris now makes this seat in Congress very competitive and could help determine whether Democrats can gain the 24 seats they need to retake control of the U.S. House of Representatives. Three rating groups now list the seat as favoring the Democrat challenger, Dan McCready, a former Marine who drew more votes than Pittenger, Harris, and a third candidate.

Eight incumbent members of the state General Assembly lost their seats: Rep. Justin Burr (R-Surry who was behind judicial redistricting), Rep. Beverly Boswell (R-Dare), Rep. Duane Hall (D-Wake), Rep. Rodney Moore (D-Mecklenburg), Sen. David Curtis (R-Lincoln), Sen. Shirley Randleman (R-Wilkes who was double-bunked with Sen Deanne Ballard, R-Watauga), Sen. Ban Barrett (R-Davie who was double-bunked with Sen. Joyce Krawiec, R-Forsyth), and Sen. Joel Ford (D-Mecklenburg). Rep. Sam Watford (R-Davidson) failed to win his party's nomination for an open Senate seat and former powerful Senator Bob Rucho who represented Mecklenburg County lost in his re-election effort, this time running in another district.

Alzheimer's North Carolina Changes Name: Last week Alzheimer's North Carolina announced that after operating for more than 30 years as Alzheimer's North Carolina, they have changed their name to the **Dementia Alliance of North Carolina** which they feel more accurately communicates their mission, vision and unique role at the intersection of local support for caregivers, Dementia education, and research for all types of Dementia. The statement announcing the name change also noted that while their name has changed, their commitment to providing local Dementia support, education and research remains as strong as ever, and the name change will help to eliminate any confusion that they are affiliated with the national Alzheimer's Association or that they are the same organization. To learn more about this change, go to the Alliance's website at <https://dementianc.org/>.

First Aging Policy Listening Session Held: The first of the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services' five Aging Policy Listening Sessions for the 2019-2023 State Aging Services Plan was held on May 8 at the Folk Art Center on the Blue Ridge Parkway in Asheville. The Listening Sessions, which are co-hosted by the NC Association of Area Agencies on Aging, will help identify the needs of the state's older citizens, disabled adults, and their caregivers. As noted previously, the information gathered will also inform North Carolina's 2019-2023 Aging Services Plan and will likely guide policy work for the Division, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and other agencies of state government for the next several years. The Session in Asheville drew over 160 people and approximately 24 people made remarks. Key issues identified by speakers were transportation challenges, support for senior center, caregiver

support, adult protective services, and housing issues. Aging consumers, providers, and advocates are encouraged to come out in full force at these Sessions to make their voices heard. DHHS Assistant Secretary for Human Services, Michael Becketts, has indicated that he plans to attend all of the Listening Sessions if possible. The Coalition has sent materials to members that can be helpful in preparing remarks for the Listening Sessions. If you did not receive a copy of these, e-mail mmbethel72@gmail.com to receive a copy.

The dates and locations of the remaining listening sessions are as follows:

May 22, 2018

Piedmont Triad Regional Council
1398 Carrollton Crossing Drive
Kernersville, NC 27284
10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

May 30, 2018

New Hanover Senior Resource Center
2222 S. College Rd. Wilmington, NC 28403
Wilmington, NC
10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

June 19, 2018

Pitt County Community Schools and Recreation Building
4561 County Home Road
Greenville, NC 27858
10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

June 27, 2018

Centralina Council of Governments
9815 David Taylor Drive
Suite 100
Charlotte, NC 28262
10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Attendees may register to speak upon arrival at the meetings or in advance by completing the on-line [Listening Session Sign-Up Form](#). Speakers will be limited to three minutes and are encouraged to provide a written copy of their comments when registering. The scheduled meeting locations are accessible to people with disabilities. Those planning to attend who need assistance or special accommodations are asked to complete the [Listening Session Sign-Up Form](#).

Those who are unable to attend one of the meetings may submit written comments by June 29, 2018 to: Aging Plan, NC Division of Aging and Adult Services, 2101 Mail Service Center Raleigh, NC 27699-2101.

Comments may also be e-mailed to agingplan@dhhs.nc.gov or faxed to Aging Plan at (919)733-0443.

The current Aging Services Plan is available at <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/aging/plan.htm>.

See a related article about the Listening Sessions by Tommy Goldsmith with NC Health News, click [here](#).

Star Rating System Survey: In 2008, the NC General Assembly passed legislation to establish a Star Rated Certificate program for assisted living facilities, which includes adult care homes and family care homes, in the state. This legislation was in response to requests from North Carolina citizens for increased availability of public information about the care provided in facilities based on facility inspection reports. The Star Rating program became effective January 1, 2009, and it is administered by the [Adult Care Licensure Section](#) in N.C. Division of Health Service Regulation (DHSR). Since its inception, there have been increasing concerns raised that the Star Rating System, as currently designed, has numerous shortcomings and it is of limited value as a tool in assisting consumers to help make informed decisions regarding care options. Based on concerns raised by both consumers and providers, the General Assembly passed legislation last year that directs the NC Department of Health and Human Services to study the Star Rating Program (House Bill 657) and to report back to the General Assembly about this. One of the ways that the Department is getting input for the study is through a survey being done by the DHSR which is heading up study efforts. DHSR will continue to collect surveys until July 31 so there is still time to provide input into ways to make the Star Rating System a more effective source of information. To complete the survey, click [here](#). To read more about this go to this [NC Health News article](#).

Other News and Updates

According to the State Elections Board, the **Constitution Party of North Carolina** has collected enough signatures from registered voters to qualify as an official state party. That would allow the Party to field candidates starting in November and through the 2020 elections. The Constitution Party emphasizes fiscal conservatism, a strict reading of the U.S. Constitution, religious freedom and opposition to abortion. Party officials report they expect to field 15 to 20 candidates for the legislature, Congress and county commissions.

Last week the conservative Civitas Institute released an analysis of the **political leanings of the voters in each state legislative district**. In all, Civitas found nine House districts and five Senate districts were the most competitive in 2016 elections. House districts were 1, 12, 22, 35, 40, 66, 115, 116, and 119, and Senate districts were 1, 7, 9, 18, and 41. The Civitas calculation of the most competitive districts is narrower than one Jonathan Kappler at the N.C. Free Enterprise Institute worked out.

The **State Health Plan** has ordered Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina to **cut the rates paid to medical providers by at least 15%** to save taxpayers and state workers millions of dollars. Blue Cross provides the provider network and processes claims for the more than 720,000 teachers, state employees and retirees on the State Health Plan. The insurer also negotiates rates with providers. State Treasurer Dale Folwell said a 15% cut could save about \$300 million a year.

The Tax Foundation, a Washington-based think tank that advocates for low taxes recently released a report that cites **North Carolina's 2013 tax changes as a national model** for "reform (that) can be successful when it happens in a diligent and thoughtful way."

On May 15, Gov. Roy Cooper announced that across North Carolina, 5,717 individuals -- nearly four times the first-year goal -- have benefited since May 2017 from the first \$15.5 million in funding from the **21st Century Cures Act/State Targeted Response to the Opioid Crisis Grant**. The funds support several components of North Carolina's Opioid Action Plan. Also on May 15, North Carolina Attorney General Josh Stein filed a **lawsuit against drug manufacturer Purdue Pharma**, alleging it made deceptive and misleading statements in marketing prescription opioids. According to the lawsuit, Purdue Pharma intentionally released messages to downplay the concerns of patients and prescribers regarding opioids. The lawsuit says Purdue pushed a message of "pseudo-addiction," marketing the idea that people engaged in drug-seeking behavior because they were not receiving enough opioids, and attempted to discredit non-opioid pain relievers by saying medications like aspirin or acetaminophen are riskier for chronic pain. In other opioid related news, according to a study completed by Duke University and released on Tuesday, **North Carolina experienced an 800% increase in opioid deaths from 1996 to 2016**, with Gaston County's increase pegged at more than 1,300 percent. The study also shows that while deaths from prescription painkillers are declining, fatal overdoses from illicit heroin and Fentanyl have jumped. In addition to Gaston, the three counties with the largest increase in overdose deaths were New Hanover and Brunswick on the North Carolina coast, and Vance, northeast of Raleigh on Interstate 85.

On May 14, several hundred people attended a rally in Raleigh as a part of a **national campaign to draw attention to poverty** in statehouses across the country. It was one of many days of protest and direct action scheduled during the next 40 days which will culminate in a rally in Washington, D.C. The goal of the Poor People's Campaign, which was co-launched by the Rev. William J. Barber II, the former head of the state NAACP and the architect of the Moral Monday protest movement, is to push the plight of poor people to the top of the agenda in statehouses and U.S. Congress. Forty-nine people in the group were cited by Raleigh police with impeding the flow of traffic in front of the North Carolina Legislative Building on Jones Street.

The NC Department of Health and Human Services put online a **statewide interactive map showing a variety of social determinants for health**. The layered state guide called a "story map," lets users track information from 10 county-based public health regions across the state. The data show the chief non-medical factors -- residents' economic status, social and neighborhood conditions, and housing and transportation access -- that can have overriding effects on community health.

The NC Division of Aging and Adult Services reports that **313 Lifespan Respite Program voucher have been awarded** to caregivers in need across the state. Applications have closed out for this cycle, but the Division expects that new vouchers will be available this fall when the next funding cycle begins.

NC MedAssist which provides free prescription medication to North Carolina residents who are low-income, uninsured, and fall at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level served

15,565 patients in fiscal year 2016. The program's services saved state residents \$85 million annually in health care cost avoidance. In fiscal year, \$48.5 million worth of prescription medications were dispensed.

Registration is now open for the **2018 NC Nonprofits Conference** that will be held September 12-14 at the Sheraton Imperial Hotel at Research Triangle Park. Explore all offerings, opportunities, and pricing at www.conference.ncnonprofits.org.

In early May, the **NC Chamber of Commerce released its second report on ways to control health costs and improve quality**. The report examined two potential components of a more comprehensive healthcare information system – all-payer claims database and health information exchanges.

The N.C. Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) estimates that 4 million North Carolinians will eventually want a **REAL ID**, a form of driver's license that meets stricter federal identification standards that go into effect in October 2020. Only about 445,000 people have gotten one so far, and the DMV is encouraging people to not wait to get the ID. The REAL ID looks and works like a driver's license or state-issued ID, except that it has a gold star in the upper right-hand corner. The star indicates that the license satisfies federal ID requirements for boarding airplanes and entering federal buildings, military bases and nuclear facilities.

Superior Court Judge Allen Baddour has decided to allow four North Carolina voters to pursue their **libel lawsuit against allies of former Gov. Pat McCrory** and a Virginia law firm that tried to help McCrory's unsuccessful effort to disqualify votes and win re-election in 2016. The McCrory allies accused voters in 52 counties of double voting and other misdeeds.

The state retirement system and a handful of school systems are battling over a formula that will ultimately decide **who pays millions in pension costs for top-salaried retirees**. State Treasurer Dale Folwell says school systems, community colleges and others have to be held accountable for increasing salaries for employees at the end of their careers, giving them a larger pension for life. Government agencies fighting the change say it's much more complicated than that and that the system penalizes those who rise through the ranks or spend parts of their career out of state. The General Assembly will ultimately decide this fight and address important details to North Carolina's 2014 anti-pension-spiking law.

The Eldercare Locator web address has changed. The new site is <https://eldercare.acl.gov>. The automatic redirect of the old website address to the new one was recently retired therefore the site www.eldercare.gov is no longer working. Any bookmarks or links on websites should be updated. The Eldercare Locator is a public service of the U.S. Administration for Community Living which connects people to services for older adults and their families. The site can search by zip code, city/state, or topic to provide information on relevant (local) services.

Based on ratings from the Washington-based nonprofit Leapfrog Group, **North Carolina is ranked 9th in the nation for the percentage of A-rated hospitals**. The Leapfrog Safety Grade assesses about 2,500 acute care hospitals nationwide, based on 27 performance measures, producing a composite letter grade. The group assessed 74 hospitals in North Carolina, giving 42

percent of them an A. The safety score is derived from data compiled by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Agency for Healthcare Research Quality, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Hospital Association, Health Information Technology Supplement and Leapfrog's own survey.

On May 8, President Trump released his formal **request to reduce \$15 billion in unspent federal funds**. The process called rescission gives Congress 45 days to eliminate federal funding identified by the executive branch by simple majority votes in both houses. To read more about this, click [here](#).

President Trump, on May 11, unveiled his first **attempt to bring down the high costs of prescription drugs** with his plan: “**American Patients First: The Trump Administration Blueprint to Lower Drug Prices and Reduce Out-of-Pocket Costs**.” To learn more, click [here](#).

As of May 2018, **NCOA’s Aging Mastery Program®** (AMP) meets all criteria to qualify as an evidence-based program under Title III-D of the Older Americans Act.

New Medicare cards started being mailed out last month. To help with this transition, CMS has updated its web pages to provide information and resources about the new cards. These resources are designed for beneficiaries, partners and stakeholders, and are available for anyone to download. Examples of resources featured on the redesigned web pages include beneficiary fact sheets, blog posts, informational videos, and a social media toolkit. [Click here](#) to visit the updated Medicaid.gov web page. [Click here](#) to visit the updated CMS.gov/newcard landing page. [Click here](#) to access outreach and education materials.

Diabetes self-management training (DSMT) provides people with diabetes the skills to improve their quality of life. Unfortunately, it’s severely underutilized. Last week, Reps. Reed (R-NY) and Degette (D-CO) introduced legislation to remove barriers to DSMT for Medicare beneficiaries. [Read the bill](#).

Hepatitis C is a blood-borne virus that can lead to a chronic infection and damage to the liver. Chronic hepatitis C infection is curable in most cases, but many people living with hepatitis C do not know they are infected and are not accessing treatment that can prevent disease progression and liver damage, including cirrhosis and liver cancer. According to the CDC, approximately 75 percent of all people who are chronically infected with the hepatitis C virus in the United States are baby boomers who were born between 1945 and 1965. This age group also experiences one of the highest death rates from the virus. As these individuals grow older and live longer with undiagnosed hepatitis C virus infection, they are increasingly likely to develop severe liver disease and liver cancer. May 19, **National Hepatitis Testing Day**, offers an opportunity to reach new groups, to raise awareness of hepatitis B and hepatitis C, and to encourage more individuals to learn their status. The CDC recommends that all adults born between 1945 and 1965 receive one-time testing for the hepatitis C virus. By testing and diagnosing all baby boomers with chronic hepatitis C virus, we can care for and cure many, averting at least 120,000 deaths, according to one CDC estimate. The CDC maintains a [website](#) that makes it easy to find a local provider for hepatitis C testing.

Results from an [international clinical trial](#) of more than 4880 participants, published in the New England Journal of Medicine, show that combining clopidogrel and aspirin following a small stroke or experiencing minor stroke symptoms **decreases risk of a new stroke**, heart attack or other ischemic event within 90 days.

The U.S. House of Representatives has passed **Veterans Health Care Overhaul legislation**. The bill (S 2372) would extend funding for the Veterans Choice Program by \$5.2 billion before combining the program with other community care programs offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs in 2019. The Choice program is expected to run out of funds by May 31. The Choice program allows veterans to seek care outside of the VA if they live more than 40 miles from a VA facility or have to wait more than 30 days for an appointment. The bill would instead allow veterans to see a private doctor if their service isn't provided by the VA or if the doctor agrees that private care is in the patient's best interest.

CMS is seeking comments on an interim **final rule that increases payments to suppliers for some Durable Medical Equipment (DME) and enteral nutrition** in areas of the country that are not subject to the Durable Medical Equipment, Prosthetics, Orthotics, and Supplies (DEMPOS) Competitive Bidding Process (CBP). These include rural areas, and Alaska, Hawaii and the territories. From June 1 through December 31, 2018, payments will return to the blended rates that were in effect in 2016. The change is in response to stakeholder concerns about significant financial challenges created by the current rates for suppliers, as well as concerns that the number of suppliers in certain areas continues to decline. It is projected to result in a \$70 million dollar Medicare cost-sharing increase to beneficiaries. This increase may be covered by supplemental insurance programs like Medigap, and for dual eligible beneficiaries, Medicaid pays the cost sharing. However, beneficiaries who do not have supplemental insurance or who are not dual eligible will have increased cost sharing. For more information on Durable Medical Equipment Fee Schedule, Adjustments to Resume the Transitional 50/50 Blended Rates to Provide Relief in Rural Areas and Non-Contiguous Areas (CMS-1687-IFC) or to submit a comment on or before July 9, 2018, [visit Regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov).

On May 8, 2018, the National Association States United for Aging and Disabilities (NASUAD) submitted a comment **letter to the Office of Workforce Investment Employment and Training Administration, at the U.S. Department of Labor** (DOL). This letter was in response to DOL's information collection request (ICR) **regarding the Senior Community Service Employment Program, commonly referred to as SCSEP**. SCSEP is the only Federal job and training program aimed specially at older, unemployed low-income American workers. To view the letter, click [here](#).

NASUAD has announced the release of a **new report, *Managed Long-Term Services and Supports (MLTSS) for People for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: Strategies for Success***, co-authored with the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS). Read the report [here](#).

The Administration for Community Living (ACL) has released updated reports for the Year 1 **National Adult Maltreatment Reporting System (NAMRS) data**. NAMRS compiles data volunteered by states and local Adult Protective Services systems on the abuse of older adults and adults with disabilities. Overall, fifty-four of 56 states and territories contributed data to NAMRS in Year 1 (Fiscal Year 2016). Information collected includes APS staff and case-load,

response time, intake and investigation practices, maltreatment type, victim characteristics, and perpetrator characteristics. [Click here](#) to access Report 1, along with the background report and appendices A-C.

ACL has published the **2017 edition of The Profile of Older Americans**. This annual document compiles data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the National Center for Health Statistics, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics to create a statistical summary of older Americans. The Profile focuses specifically on the population of people aged 65 and older. It looks at changing demographics across individual categories including population, income and poverty, living arrangements, education, health, and caregiving. [Click here](#) to access the full profile, as well as data tables and charts in excel.

On May 8, **CMS released its first Rural Health Strategy** intended to provide a proactive approach on healthcare issues to ensure that the nearly one in five individuals who live in rural America have access to high quality, affordable healthcare. “For the first time, CMS is organizing and focusing our efforts to apply a rural lens to the vision and work of the agency,” said CMS Administrator Seema Verma. “The Rural Health Strategy supports CMS’ goal of putting patients first. Through its implementation and our continued stakeholder engagement, this strategy will enhance the positive impacts CMS policies have on beneficiaries who live in rural areas.” The agency-wide Rural Health Strategy, built on input from rural providers and beneficiaries, focuses on five objectives to achieve the agency’s vision for rural health: Apply a rural lens to CMS programs and policies, Improve access to care through provider engagement and support, Advance telehealth and telemedicine, Empower patients in rural communities to make decisions about their healthcare, and Leverage partnerships to achieve the goals of the CMS Rural Health Strategy. For More Information: [Rural Health](#) webpage and [Fact Sheet](#).

The **Southeastern Association of Area Agencies on Aging (SE4A)** acknowledges exemplary service to older adults in the southeast region through their annual **SE4A awards**. The annual awards given include Jane Kennedy Excellence in Aging, Positive Images in Aging, Corporate Partnership, Outstanding Community Service, Outstanding Volunteer in Aging, and the Aging Impact Award. Award recipients will be recognized at the 2018 Annual SE4A Training Conference in Louisville, KY on October 1, 2018. The nomination forms for these awards are now live online. Visit www.se4a.org and click on the "awards" link to read descriptions of the various awards and download the applications.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the Administration for Community Living, together with the National Coalition on Mental Health and Aging, are hosting the first **National Older Adult Mental Health Awareness Day** on Friday, May 18, 2018 from 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. This event is designed to raise public awareness about the mental health of older Americans and spur action to address the needs of this population and will be livestreamed. Registration is required to view the webcast. [Reserve your seat today](#).

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) launched its new **Tax Exempt Organization Search (TEOS) tool**. This new tool, which replaces the old IRS Select Check system, **simplifies and streamlines searches for tax-exempt organizations**. The IRS will gradually add links on TEOS to

nonprofits' Forms 990 (starting with those filed in 2018) and to the IRS determination letters for nonprofits that qualified for tax-exemption in 2014 or later.

Looking for **Alzheimer's caregiving information in Spanish**? Check out [*Cómo cuidar a una persona con la enfermedad de Alzheimer: Una guía fácil de usar del Instituto Nacional Sobre el Envejecimiento*](#). This new book from the National Institute on Aging at NIH has helpful tips on topics including: changes in behavior; wandering; healthy eating and exercise; and caregiver health. Copies are available to [order for free](#), or [read the new Alzheimer's caregiving information](#) in Spanish online.

People in the News

Melinda Munden has been named Deputy Commissioner of the NC Department of Insurance and Director of the Seniors' Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP). She has been with the SHIIP program since 2005. She worked as Senior Operations Manager prior to assuming the Director's position.

Dr. Althea Taylor-Jones who retired in 2009 from Winston-Salem State University after serving as Professor and Program Coordinator/Director for the Gerontology Program is this year's recipient of the Southern Gerontological Society's Rhonda Jennings Distinguished Older Advocate Award. The award is given to recognize an older person whose retirement years have been devoted to community and legislative advocacy. Among other service efforts, she served as Speaker of the NC Senior Tar Heel Legislature from 2015-2017.

Alicia Blater has been hired as the Dementia Services Coordinator for the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS). Prior to being selected for this position, she worked for DAAS for over nine years as the state Family Caregiver Support Consultant and managed the Lifespan Respite grant program.

Lara Cole has come on board with AARP North Carolina as Associate State Director serving the Charlotte area.

Ray Starling, former aide to Sen. Tom Tillis, is leaving a job at the White House to serve as chief of staff for the U.S. Department of Agriculture under Secretary Sonny Perdue, according to reports on several agriculture news websites. Starling joined President Donald Trump's administration as special assistant to the president for agriculture, trade and food assistance. He'd previously served as Tillis' chief of staff in the Senate, and general counsel for Tillis' Senate office and in the office of N.C. House Speaker when Tillis was in that role. He was general counsel at the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services before working for Tillis.

Peter Hans, a government relations adviser and former member of the UNC system and community college boards, has been named as the new president of North Carolina's community college system.

Upcoming Meetings/Events for the Next Month

The Month of May is Older Americans Month. Visit oam.acl.gov for materials, activity ideas, and resources to help promote and celebrate this year's theme, Engage at Every Age.

May 18, 2018 – NC Coalition on Aging Monthly Meeting – Brown Building on Dix campus (801 Biggs Drive) at 10:00 a.m.

May 22-24, 2018 - NCOA Center for Healthy Aging Annual Meeting - in Arlington, Virginia

May 22, 2018 – Webinar: Addressing Behavioral Health Needs of Older Veterans: In our Communities and in Partnership from 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m. – Hosted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); [Register for the event](#)

May 23, 2018 – State Employees Association of North Carolina Retiree Lobby Day – Meet at SEANC office beginning at 8:30 a.m. for shuttle to Legislative Building. Return to SEANC office by 1:00 p.m. for lunch. RSVP to Tony Boone at 1-800-222-2758.

May 23, 2018 – Prayer Breakfast for Closing the Gap – 7:15 – 8:30 a.m. at NC Museum of History; RSVP to Carla Obiol at Carla.obiol@heart.org.

June 3-6, 2018 - 2018 Annual Information and Referral Training and Education Conference - in Dallas, Texas

June 8, 2018 – Alzheimer's Association Presents "Accelerating the Pace: Clinical Strategies, Research Advances, and Advocacy Efforts in Dementia" in Cary, NC at One Eleven Place (111 Realtors Way) at 8:45 a.m. (registration starts at 8:00).

June 12, 2018 – National I&A Support Center Webinar on VA Caregiver Support – from 3:00 – 4:00 p.m. To register go to <https://nasuad.webex.com/nasuad/onstage/g.php?MTID=eca360b9c9339fe612782a9a985f2fd90>.

June 14, 2018 - Caregiver Summit - at The Sheraton Imperial (4700 Emperor Blvd.) in Durham from 8:00 am to 3:30 pm - Info. & Registration [Click Here](#).

June 15, 2018 – World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

June 22, 2018 – NC Coalition on Aging Monthly Meeting – Brown Building on Dix campus (801 Biggs Drive) at 10:00 a.m.

June 23, 2018 - Triangle EXPO for LGBTQ Aging Adults - at Five Points Center for Active Adults, Raleigh, NC

July 16-17, 2018 - Healthy Aging Summit - at Omni Shoreham Hotel, Washington, D.C.

Additional Future Items Not Previously Added to the [Calendar](#) are on the Coalition's Website.

Articles/News Stories/Resources

- [Tech Support Scams](#)
- [Financial Industry Regulatory Authority's \(FINRA's\) new rules with regard to the financial exploitation of older investors \(FINRA's press release\)](#)
- [Few teeth in Trump's prescription to reduce drug prices](#)
- [Caregivers Need to Take a Break](#)
- [American Medical Association stands firm on assisted suicide](#)
- [No Luck Finding the Right Nursing Home? Maybe Yelp Can Help](#)
- [Helping Older Adults "Engage at Every Age"](#)
- [Former congressman Jeff Miller emerges as a leading contender for Trump's VA](#)
- [NIH Seeks One Million Volunteers for Medical Database](#)
- [Elder Justice Policy Highlights](#)
- [Maine governor sued for defying Medicaid expansion ballot measure](#)
- [HHS Proposes Medicare Payment Rules To Encourage Hospitals To Be Clearer About Prices](#)
- [Five Ways to Help Cancer Patients Avoid the Emergency Room](#)
- [Aging Baby Boomers And Obesity Epidemic Driving Increase In Arthritis Cases—Many Of Which Are Undiagnosed](#)
- [Which Poor People Shouldn't Have to Work for Aid?](#)
- [One Day Your Mind May Fade. At Least You'll Have a Plan](#)
- [There's a Genuine Solution to Our Health Care Problem](#)
- [More Americans suffer major depression, Blue Cross Blue Shield data finds](#)
- [Tick and Mosquito Infections Spreading Rapidly, C.D.C. Finds](#)

North Carolina Related

- [County Profiles on Housing Needs](#)
- [Facts About Hunger in North Carolina](#)
- [VA reform bill draws protesters, but response from vets mixed](#)
- [DHHS gains federal OK for pilot program on traumatic brain injuries](#)
- [Tarboro assisted living resident charged with strangling fellow resident, raping second](#)
- [Wake County Meals on Wheels wait list keeps growing](#)
- [Anti-Hunger Advocate Redefines His Solution To Hunger](#)
- [Does N.C. make the cut as one of the best states for nurses?](#)
- [Raleigh Nursing Home Resident Berated](#)
- [Flu Deaths Rose Sharply In The Carolinas](#)
- [Raleigh OKs money for affordable housing at Sir Walter and at Southeast Raleigh site](#)
- [Despite New Law, Thousands Of Doctors In N.C. Are Over-Prescribing Opioids](#)

NC Health News Stories:

- Stein Sues Purdue Pharma Over Deceptive Marketing of Opioids
- Opioid Epidemic Inundating Public Health, Foster Care Systems
- Wake Forest Baptist Still Reviewing Thousands of Pathology Cases
- Governor's Health Care Budget Emphasizes Medicaid Expansion, Scaling Back Some Tax Breaks
- Scams Targeting Older North Carolinians Keep Coming
- As NC Ages, You Can Help the State Plan
- Study: Black Women with Breast Cancer Suffer More Financially
- Welcoming People with Disabilities Into Arts Spaces

NPR Aging Series:

- Vision Care Lags, With Blind Spots In Insurance Coverage
- Taking The 'Journey' Through Alzheimer's Together
- Trump Drug Pricing 'Blueprint' Could Take Years To Build
- 'I Look Forward' To Ending My Life, Assisted Suicide Backer Says Before Dying
- Under A Trump Proposal, Lawful Immigrants Might Shun Medical Care
- Why Can't Medicare Patients Use Drugmakers' Discount Coupons?
- Listless And Lonely In Puerto Rico, Some Older Storm Survivors Consider Suicide
- Americans Are A Lonely Lot, And Young People Bear The Heaviest Burden
- Family Caregivers Finally Get A Break — And Some Coaching
- In Indiana, Advocates For Senior Citizens Form Army Of Guardians To Offer Care

Dates for 2018 Coalition Meetings: Mark your calendar for all the Coalition's meetings for the rest of the year. The schedule is as follows:

May 18
June 22
August 24
September 28 (annual meeting at NC State University Club)
October 26
December 7

Meetings are held from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon in room 104 of the Brown Building on the Dix Campus (801 Biggs Drive) unless notified otherwise. For those who can not attend in person but can call in, the call in number is [1-866-215-3402](tel:1-866-215-3402) and the passcode is 5080266#.

Membership Registration and Renewal: Coalition on Aging membership registration/renewal can be done in one of two ways.

Option 1: Go to <http://www.nccoalitiononaging.org/membership.aspx>. And print off a membership registration/renewal form which can be completed and returned along with dues payment (payable to the NC Coalition on Aging) to the address noted on the form.

Option 2: Complete the registration and payment process (PayPal) on-line. Contributions in addition to dues can also be paid in this way.

The Coalition has a hardship provision for those who wish to join the Coalition but are unable to pay the full dues amount. To apply for this hardship provision, please contact Mary Bethel, Coalition President, at mmbethel72@gmail.com.

Submitting Information for Updates: If you have news or information on activities and events you would like to have included in an *Update* to Coalition members, please send details to Mary Bethel, Coalition President, at mmbethel72@gmail.com. The Coalition also posts a master calendar of aging related events and activities on its website.

Have questions about the Coalition on Aging or need more information, including information about joining the Coalition or renewing membership, please contact us at mmbethel72@gmail.com or check out our website at <http://www.nccoalitiononaging.org/>.